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Curriculum Ideas for Teachers

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English
Intermediate
Division

Reading

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A Few Comments on the Reading Process

Reading involves responding to some kind of stimulus, often print. Although much of the material appearing in this document will apply to print, it must be remembered that we *read* far more than print alone. For example, we also *read* film, television, pictures, maps, and the clues in an archaeological dig.

This reading demands the use of two basic and mutually reinforcing techniques:
– decoding to find out what the outward signs indicate;
– bringing past experience to bear on the material so that, through a series of guesses and hypotheses, a reasonable and satisfactory solution can be found.

Many of the questions we ask ourselves in attempting to unravel the meaning of non-print stimuli, we also ask when trying to comprehend print. In asking them, we come to realize that reading can never exist alone. Listening, speaking, writing, and reading, we find, are interdependent skills. Their interdependence, as well as the need to integrate them in an English program, is underlined in *English, Intermediate Division, 1977*.

> Reading is not an isolated language skill, but one facet of the individual's total language facility. It follows, therefore, that reading both contributes to and is enhanced by some of the other aspects of the language program– speaking, listening, writing, spelling, viewing, and discussing. Thus, the integration of the language arts in the English program is both necessary and desirable.[1]

A Language for Life, produced after thorough study of the reading process, also stresses that language skills are not discrete skills.

> Reading, writing, talking and listening are associated abilities which the school should go on developing throughout a pupil's educational life.[2]

As well, it must be realized that students in the Intermediate Division will not all be reading at the same level. Some may have a sophisticated understanding of reading techniques and a positive attitude towards reading; others, hampered by their lack of both ability and enthusiasm for reading, may be struggling to decode and bring meaning to the very simplest materials. The four major stages of reading development are outlined clearly in *English, Intermediate Division* and deserve very careful scrutiny.

Introduction

English, Intermediate Division, 1977 states that "the basis of the compulsory English curriculum is an integrated balance of reading, writing, speaking, and listening." It also states that "the objectives of the English program in the Intermediate Division are not fundamentally different from, but build upon, those of the divisions that precede it, and at the same time contribute to the objectives of the division that follows."[3]

Language Across the Curriculum draws attention to the responsibility of teachers in all subject areas "to reinforce the key role of language in the learning process" and reminds teachers of the opportunities that arise in their subject areas "for developing language proficiency".[4] Because of the intimate relationship between language and learning, the interdependence of learning and reading, it is to the advantage of all teachers to encourage and help students develop their skill in using language. In the Junior Division, teachers lay the foundation for and begin the development of sound and useful language skills, but they can by no means provide students with all the training in language they will ever need.

Reading is essentially a resource document intended to provide observations, suggestions, strategies, and activities to help teachers in all subject areas realize the objectives defined in *English, Intermediate Division*. It emphasizes, in particular, the importance and interdependence of good listening, questioning, and reading skills in the learning process. What students learn and the way in which they learn it are to a large extent determined by the degree of mastery they have over these skills.

The structure of *Reading* is straightforward and related to its purpose as a resource document. The first section is devoted to suggestions, strategies, and activities intended to further the development of listening and questioning skills. The second section reviews special reading programs which can bring to the study of English the variety, flexibility, and concern for individual differences that, as *English, Intermediate Division* emphasizes, are needed in an effective language program. The final section provides suggested teaching strategies and student activities which recognize the spectrum of skills included under the heading Reading Skills.

1. Ministry of Education, Ontario, *English, Intermediate Division, 1977*, p. 26.

2. Department of Education and Science, London, *A Language for Life: Report of the Committee of Inquiry Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science Under the Chairmanship of Sir Alan Bullock FBA*, p. 26.

3. *English, Intermediate Division, 1977*, p. 4.

4. Ministry of Education, Ontario, *Language Across the Curriculum, 1978*, p. 3.

Listening and Questioning

Purposeful Listening and Reading

Both reading and listening are aspects of communication and as such resemble each other in a number of ways.

– Both require mental organization.
– Both involve making meaningful associations, and interpreting words and larger units.
– Both require the ability to discriminate, anticipate, and concentrate on the task at hand.
– Both require purpose, whether it be to gain information or derive enjoyment.
– Both operate on a number of levels: the literal, the critical, the synthesizing, and the creative.

Students often become interested in reading independently after hearing a story well read or well told. Studies have shown that giving students practice in listening for specific purposes improves their ability to read for specific purposes.

All the studies of listening and reading indicate that pupils learn and remember more through listening than through reading. Therefore, teachers *must* set aside time to help students become proficient listeners.

Teachers should also provide students with opportunities to acquire specific listening skills closely related to certain basic reading skills. These related skills involve such things as:

1. word perception
– recalling word meanings
– deducing meanings of unknown words

2. comprehension of ideas
– following directions
– selecting information pertinent to a specific topic
– organizing and outlining
– recognizing significant clues
– noting main ideas, important details, sequence, and so on

3. evaluation of new ideas
– evaluating what has been heard in the light of previous learning
– making reasonable and justifiable inferences

Purposeful Questioning

Much of learning depends upon the ability to listen carefully to questions.

Just as the listener must learn to listen carefully to questions, so must the questioner learn to adjust his or her questioning to particular situations. He or she must also realize that the kinds of questions asked will probably determine both the ways in which the listener will think and the types of answers he or she will give.

It is generally agreed that there are several levels of thinking. There appear to be four main types of questions corresponding to these levels:
– cognitive memory
– convergent
– divergent
– evaluative

Cognitive memory questions always ask for facts, dates, names, and so on. For example: *When did Columbus sail from the Old World for the first time?*

"*Convergent* questions always seek particular answers but allow for a variety of routes." For example: *What troubles did Columbus encounter on the way?*

Divergent questions always encourage totally different answers. For example: *What might have happened had Columbus not been helped by Isabella of Spain?*

Evaluative questions always ask for judgements and opinions. For example: *Do you think the New World would have been better off had the British, and not the Spanish, settled South America?*

Sometimes teachers tend to limit their questions to the cognitive memory type. Students quickly learn that straight factual answers are required, give them, and are satisfied. If teachers suddenly confront them with questions of a higher level of complexity (evaluative questions, for example), students are unable to answer and feel training has not prepared them to read between the lines, to make judgements. And who can blame them wholly if they feel frustrated? Furthermore, without plenty of practice in answering questions more demanding than those of cognitive memory, students may not gain any true appreciation of literature.

Suggested Strategies for Teachers

1. To give students practice in answering various types of questions, take a simple cognitive memory question and turn it into questions of other types. For example:

Cognitive memory:
Name the seasons of the year.
Convergent:
How are the seasons alike and how are they different?
Divergent:
How would our way of life change if we had only one season?
Evaluative:
Would you prefer to live in a climate which was always warm or always cold?

2. Have students, after they are thoroughly aware of the types of questions, take the following cognitive memory questions and convert them to questions of the three other types:
– Where is the hottest place in North America?
– How many years elapsed between the establishment of the first settlements in Canada and Confederation?
– Who was the leader of the first crusade?
– Who is the hero of *Wuthering Heights?*

Reading Programs

Demands Reading Makes

Students must not only bring their personal experiences to the material they read, they must also evaluate this material and apply it to other situations. If they are to derive maximum value from their reading, students must be able to:
– read literally, that is, read accurately;
– read critically, that is, interpret what they read;
– read creatively, that is, evaluate and apply what they read.

Students must also increase their ability to carry out independent study and research in the content areas. They must be able to:
– locate and select information for a specific purpose;
– organize and present information in an appropriate form.

Special Programs

If they are to provide English programs suited to all students, schools must develop a variety of reading programs. The main thing to remember is that all students are different. There is no point in attempting to fit all students into a Procrustean bed. They move ahead at differing levels of attainment, and schools must provide for their individual needs.

What follows are a few observations and suggestions related to reading programs.

– Every secondary school should ascertain what stage students are in and offer, where needed, assistance that focuses not on literary studies, but on the goals prescribed in *English, Intermediate Division* for reading, writing, and oral work.

– Each English course should contain a strong reading-skills component. Students, for example, should be taught how to skim, how to find the main idea in a passage, and how to vary their reading pace according to the nature and purpose of the reading assignment.

– In Grades 7 and 8, grouping and individualized programs are essential.

– In Grades 9 and 10, grouping and some individualized reading methods are essential.

– Additional instruction must be provided for weak readers.

– Special programs must be provided for students for whom English is a second language.

– Locally designed courses should be offered to meet the needs of students unable to profit from the use of textbooks and other materials employed in other subject areas.

– Vocational school students should be able to take courses which will permit their eventual transfer to other types of programs.

Very careful evaluation during and at the conclusion of all reading programs is essential. Decisions must be made concerning the best program for each student to follow in the coming year. Some students will move successfully from a booster program in Grade 9 into a general program in Grade 10. Others will benefit more by moving into a booster Grade 10 program, and so on.

An Individualized Reading Program

The curriculum guideline stipulates that students should be actively involved on a regular basis in personal reading rather than in teacher-dominated discussions focusing on literary criticism.[5] An individualized reading program is one way of satisfying this stipulation.

The individualized reading program is very flexible. A wide range of reading materials is possible because each student is reading a different book. This wide choice recognizes the individual differences in abilities outlined in the curriculum guideline in "The Four Stages of Reading Development".[6]

Furthermore, the integration of reading, listening, speaking, writing, and thinking is nowhere as immediate as it is in the individualized reading program. The conferences between teacher and student which form part of the program provide the students with opportunities for discussion, argument, purposeful oral reading, and written expression in the form of follow-up assignments.

In a successful individualized reading program careful consideration will have been given to:
– the daily schedule;
– the choice of books;
– the teacher-student conference;
– the teaching and learning arising out of the conferences.

1. The Daily Schedule

Each day a specific time must be set aside for reading. Since an atmosphere conducive to reading is essential, students must accept the fact that they will normally be silent during this time and not usually interrupt other students. As well, they must know that the teacher is available for consultation.

When introducing an individualized reading program, the teacher will find it beneficial to discuss the advantages of the program with the students. He or she should not be in a hurry to initiate the conferences, important though these may be. Getting students into the habit of sustained silent reading is what is most important. Pressures will sometimes seem to suggest that the time set aside for reading could be better used for other work; however, it is most important that students be given the time *every day*.

2. Choice of Books

a) The Private, Controlled Library

A number of books, ideally fifty to one hundred per class, are set aside as a private, controlled library. This library can be an independent collection or it can be made up of books selected from the school library on semi-permanent loan. The books, frequently paperbacks, will most often be novels, to accustom students to reading continuous prose.

This library is private in that, for a specified period, six months or a year, for example, it belongs exclusively to a particular class. The books must remain in the classroom to be available to the class at all times and to give the teacher a chance to become familiar with them.

This library is controlled in that it contains material of different levels of difficulty. In a Grade 7 room, for instance, there will be material ranging from Grade 4 to at least Grade 9 reading levels. The largest number of books will be at a Grade 7 reading level. Range is necessary to provide readable material for every student. Nothing is to be gained by forcing students to read for any length of time material beyond their grasp; everything is to be gained by having students read material suited to their abilities. *Control* ensures the availability of material suited to every student in the class.

During the year students will read many books from this library. Occasionally, two or three students might be reading the same title. Such a situation can be positive and desirable; however, the main strength of the program is that, to a very large degree, students are reading different books.

b) Ways of Helping Students Choose the Right Book

Some students need help in choosing a book suited to their stage of reading development.

Here are some guidelines the teacher might offer such students:
– Look for a book whose subject interests you.
– Skim the opening page of the book, a page in the middle, and the final page. If each page contains more than five words you do not know, the book may be too difficult.
– Do not be taken in by the cover. Examine books recommended by other students. Their recommendations are often sound.
– Having made your choice, make an honest effort to read the whole book. Don't feel you must read through every book you choose, but don't go on endlessly sampling.

Observing a student in a reading situation can help the teacher guide this student in his or her choice of books, as well as suggest directions the teacher's questioning might take during the teacher-student conference. In assessing a student's behaviour during a reading situation, the teacher might ask these questions about the student:
– Is the student able to read silently for a considerable period of time or is he or she easily distracted? If the latter is true, can anything be done to help the student understand and overcome this limitation?
– Does the student appear to be enjoying reading and to know how to derive meaning from a book? Can he or she use context to determine meaning?
– Can the student choose a book at the right level?

When choosing books for the private, controlled library which will appeal to students at different reading levels or stages, the teacher might find the following people helpful:
– teachers experienced in running individualized reading programs and students who have been involved in such programs;
– school and public librarians who can provide various reviews of current literature for young people;
– book companies, many of which – especially those involved with paperback books – issue lists of books with suggested grade levels.

The teacher might also consult:
– resource supplements to the curriculum guideline such as *Action/Adventure*;
– readability tests such as the Chall Formula and the Fry Formula.

5. *English, Intermediate Division, 1977*, p. 28.
6. Ibid., p. 28.

3. The Teacher-Student Conference

Any program in which students read regularly and uninterruptedly will have value. The true individualized reading program, however, includes the teacher-student conference as an integral part of the program. It is during the conferences that the teacher helps students to discover their strengths and weaknesses in reading. Because the conference is very important, it is essential that it be conducted properly. What follows are a few simple guidelines for the teacher.

– Sit beside the student in a comfortable spot. Face to face suggests confrontation; side by side suggests co-operation.

– Remember that for many students "talking with the teacher" imposes some strain. A sustained conversation with an adult is not easy for many youngsters. Do not rush into the questioning. Beginning informally will generally produce the best results.

– Your first questions should be ones the student can answer with confidence. Encourage him or her to do most of the talking. By the time the conference ends, you should have discussed the student's personal response to the book. In the course of such discussion the student's reading preferences will begin to emerge, and some of his or her problems in comprehension may become evident.

– Keep the conference relatively brief but try to include some oral reading. The student might be asked to read aloud the part he or she found to be most enjoyable. Such reading aloud encourages further discussion and creates a relaxed and non-threatening atmosphere.

– Keep notes on every conference.

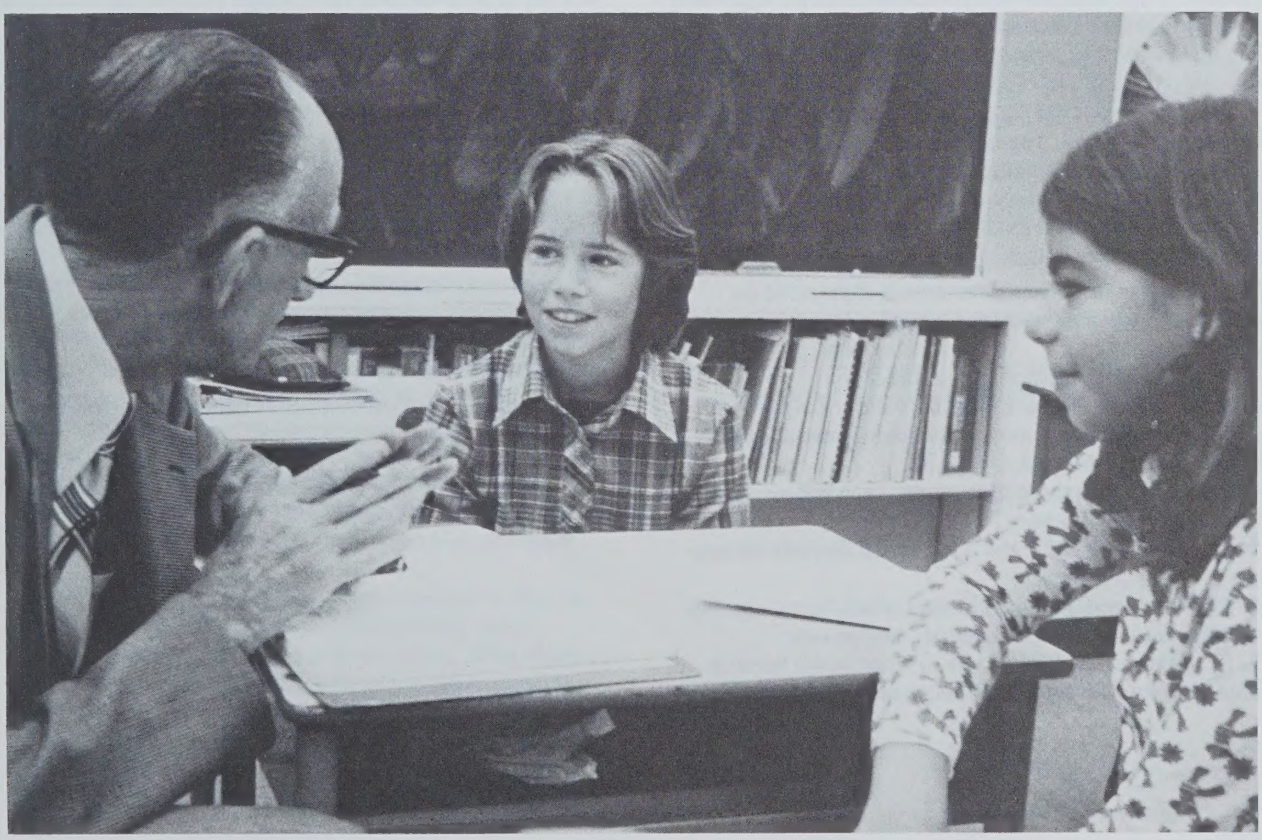
– Students should be encouraged to keep a record of their conferences by writing their personal reactions in their writing folders or in their journals. They might also do this by using a "book-book" – that is, a loose-leaf binder with a page for each student to record the books read during the program. Students might also keep a record of when they started and finished reading a specific book, what they felt about the book, how the conference went, and what follow-up activities were done.

a) Questions to Ask During the Conference

The key to a good conference is the establishment of a trusting relationship. During the conference, the teacher is trying to encourage the student to express a personal reaction to what has been read; in this way strengths and weaknesses will be revealed, and the student's personal growth through reading will be fostered. *It should be noted that the overuse of certain types of questions can lead to an undue stress on literary criticism.* The teacher should always keep in mind the main purposes of discussions and questioning. Effective questions will not only help the discussions to proceed easily but will also indicate strengths and weaknesses in reading so that students can later be grouped for skills teaching.

Here are some simple and rather general questions with which to open a conference:

1. What is the general story line?
2. Did you enjoy the book? Would you recommend it to others? To one group in particular?
3. Why do you think the author wrote the book?
4. What is the mood of the book? Comic? Sad? Nostalgic? Serious?
5. Can you categorize the book? Is it more factual than fictional?



The following questions deal with the student's personal response to a book:
1. Why did you choose this particular book?
2. What incidents in the book remind you of things that have happened to you?
3. Did you see something of yourself in any of the characters?
4. Did the characters in this story develop in a consistent way?
5. Usually the villain or antagonist in a story is punished in some way. Did the villain in this book receive just punishment?
6. Would you like to live in the place where the story takes place? At the time the story takes place?
7. How did you feel when this (*a certain event in the story*) took place? Why?
8. Sometimes fiction seems more real than fact. Did you find this story believable?
9. Is there anything in the story you would like to know more about?
10. Is there anything about the writing which strikes you as dishonest? Does the author use "tricks"?
11. What would you change about the book?
12. Sometimes reading a book can completely change a person's life. Did this story in any way profoundly affect you?
13. Do you think everyone should read this book? Why?

Additional questions which focus on words and their meanings might occasionally be asked, but the overuse of such questions may seriously undermine a student's interest in sustained reading.

b) Oral Reading

Oral reading, as a skill, will be discussed at greater length later in this document, but it must be stressed here that oral reading should form part of the teacher-student conference. Most students enjoy reading aloud passages they have selected for some specific purpose from a book they like and know. They must have some choice in the matter of what passages they will read.

Careful listening to the way a student reads can tell the teacher a great deal. The teacher can learn, for example, whether the student understands what is read, miscues in reading dialogue, or hesitates, substitutes, or regresses. When a student's oral reading is poor, the teacher should try to discover the reasons for this situation.

The following directives give some indication of the different forms oral reading might take during a conference:
1. Read the most exciting part of the story.
2. Read the part where X talks to Y about Z.
3. Tell me what happens up to chapter 5, then begin reading chapter 6 aloud.
4. Start here, read three paragraphs, then tell me what happens next in the story.
5. Read the passages in the book which directly answer my specific questions.
6. Read the poem in the collection which best describes childhood (adolescence, maturity, and so on).
7. Read the review I asked you to write of the book or read a review you found in a magazine.

4. Teaching and Learning Arising out of the Conferences

After a few interviews and conferences, the teacher will be able to define the needs of the students. Once the teacher discovers four or five students with similar needs, he or she can easily group these students to give them the personal, directed, specific teaching they need. Testing should follow teaching. Students who have mastered the skill will move out of the group; those who need more help will remain.

What kinds of needs will surface during the conference? Often the teacher will find that students need practice in:
– articulating the main idea of a selection;
– using detail to support an interpretation;
– differentiating fact from opinion;
– questioning what they read;
– developing an awareness of sequence and chronology;
– recognizing climaxes and the shape of the action;
– distinguishing one character from another;
– attacking unknown words;
– responding to figurative language.

Keeping Records

When keeping records of what is learned about a student during the conferences, the teacher would be wise to ask the following questions:
– Do I know exactly which books the student has read? Am I satisfied that he or she is choosing suitable books?
– Do I have a neat and workable system for noting what skills the student needs to develop? Am I keeping a record of his or her improvement?
– Am I noting and analysing changes in the student's attitude towards reading?
– Are my records full enough to allow me to compare the student's present with his or her past progress?
– Is my record-keeping full enough to allow me to keep a running commentary but not so complex as to become burdensome?
– Are my records well-enough organized to share them with the student (his or her parents, the principal)?

Conclusion

In summary, the aims of an individualized reading program are to teach all students how to read well within the limits of their abilities and needs, to improve their attitudes towards reading, and to inculcate in them "the reading habit".

The success of an individualized reading program depends upon several factors.

– Both teacher and students must believe that it will work.

– Both must be open and honest with each other.

– Ample reading materials must be available.

Reading Skills

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud is a skill. Virtually every authority on reading agrees that the majority of students should not be expected to read aloud without preparation and/or assistance. There are, of course, students who can read aloud at sight without difficulty, but the majority need time to prepare. *"Reading around the room", in other words, is nothing but a waste of valuable teaching time*. It takes skill to keep an audience interested.

Whether the purpose of the oral reading be to present factual material from a science text or a newspaper or to increase the appreciation of literature by the reading of a poem, the reader must not only *understand* what the writer has written, but also *convey* its meaning to the listener. To accomplish these things, the reader must study the text prior to the oral presentation with an eye to mastering:

- correct pronunciation of words;
- clear enunciation with sufficient volume;
- correct inflection;
- correct pitch;
- correct speed;
- correct voice quality and intensity of feeling;
- correct phrasing;
- correct emphasis;
- correct use of pauses;
- correct posture and placement of text.

Although it is true that oral reading frequently clarifies written material for reader and listener alike, its use need not be limited to the clarification of meaning. Reading aloud might be undertaken to pass on information or ideas. It might be a source of pleasure to the reader ("I like doing this,"), as well as to the listener ("I like hearing you read this; it brings the whole thing to life for me."). It might also be used for diagnostic purposes.

Using Various Speeds in Reading

It should be very clear that in any class at the Intermediate level students will be reading at different rates. It is desirable that students learn not only to increase their speed of reading but also to adjust it to specific purposes.

Many students tend to read everything at the same rate. Some will read textbooks at a narrative speed, and still more will read everything at a slower rate than is necessary. It is important, therefore, to have students understand that different speeds are appropriate to different purposes for reading. They should not read a dictionary the way they read a novel.

In the past it was thought that such factors as eye regression (the eyes' returning to something previously read), finger-pointing, and vocalizing or sub-vocalizing of words were the chief hindrances to increased speed. More recent research, however, suggests that these factors are symptoms of slow reading rather than the main causes.

The real problems are likely to be slowness in the rate of thinking, difficulty with word recognition, word-by-word reading, and lack of concentration. With older students the problem is often a failure to adjust reading speed to the purpose at hand.

One purpose for which students read is to find the answers to specific questions. The answer may be the definition of a word in a dictionary, a name, a date, a number, and so on. Students should realize that reading for such specific purposes is called *skimming*, and that when they skim they do not read every word. They are looking for the words that directly answer the questions.

Suggested Activities for Students

1. To calculate your reading speed, time yourself or have someone else time you as you read silently for one minute. After you finish, count the words you have read. Use a short story or a chapter from a novel on your course.

2. First, read a short story with an interesting title. Then, look up the meanings of *oxymoron, zygote,* and *bumptious* in a dictionary. Compare the speeds with which you read the short story and the definitions.

Four Reading Speeds

Reading Speed	Purpose	Materials
Skimming	– to locate information – to select the main idea – to predict outcomes – to preview – to get an overview – to set purposes for reading – to ask questions	Newspapers Magazines
Speed Reading	– to select the main idea – to select supporting details	Catalogues Directories Study materials
Study Reading*	– to gain maximum understanding – to get an overview – to distinguish the known from the unknown – to review – to organize and prepare for an oral presentation	Textbooks Technical manuals
Reflective Reading	– to follow directions – to think about what is read – to evaluate the content and style of a particular selection – to enjoy and share the aesthetic experience offered by a particular selection	Same as above Recipes Directions Works of literature

*Slower than the first two speeds but faster than Reflective Reading.

3. For each question, circle the word on the left as it appears in the list of words on the right. Work as quickly as you can. Do not *say* the words to yourself.

a)	cape	cap, cape, cope, tent, carp
b)	feast	feat, feather, tether, feast, forego
c)	against	against, gains, aghast, again, abash
d)	daily	dally, dilly, daily, dainty, dagger
e)	polo	pole, poker, polo, painter, pal
f)	label	lonely, love, labour, lackey, label
g)	knife	knife, light, night, knight, life
h)	rinse	ring, ringlet, rinks, rightful, rinse
i)	ladder	ladle, rubber, ladder, lady, landlord
j)	recite	record, recite, rejoin, recognize, recount
k)	total	tabulate, tote, tower, total, terrific
l)	arrest	attest, address, arrest, bequest, confess
m)	forget	forget, foresee, foresaw, saw, regret
n)	woollen	women, wooden, woollen, wine, wonder
o)	there	leather, their, then, there, these
p)	tough	tough, touch, totter, totem, rough
q)	thimble	tremble, thin, thimble, fumble, trundle
r)	twilight	tonight, twilight, tight, right, twin
s)	women	woman, weather, women, winner, thinner
t)	potato	tomato, tobacco, regatta, potato, tomahawk

(Note: The foregoing exercise is suited to Stage 1 students and may increase the speed with which students perceive whole words. Later, phrases can be substituted for individual words.)

4. Place a check mark beside each item in the following list which mentions something that can be read:

– the Blue Jays' manager
– a new book
– Tuesday morning
– walking along together
– a newspaper advertisement
– driving an automobile
– a Wintario ticket
– forty-five seconds
– a list of names
– ten pages of notes

(Note: The foregoing exercise, designed to increase the speed with which phrases are comprehended, is best suited, perhaps, to Stage 2 students. The exercise can be repeated with phrases composed by the class. Each student writes three phrases, one or two of which are about something edible – or alive, or mechanical, and so on – and submits them to the teacher, who draws up the list.)

5. In each of the following paragraphs underline the phrase or sentence that doesn't belong:

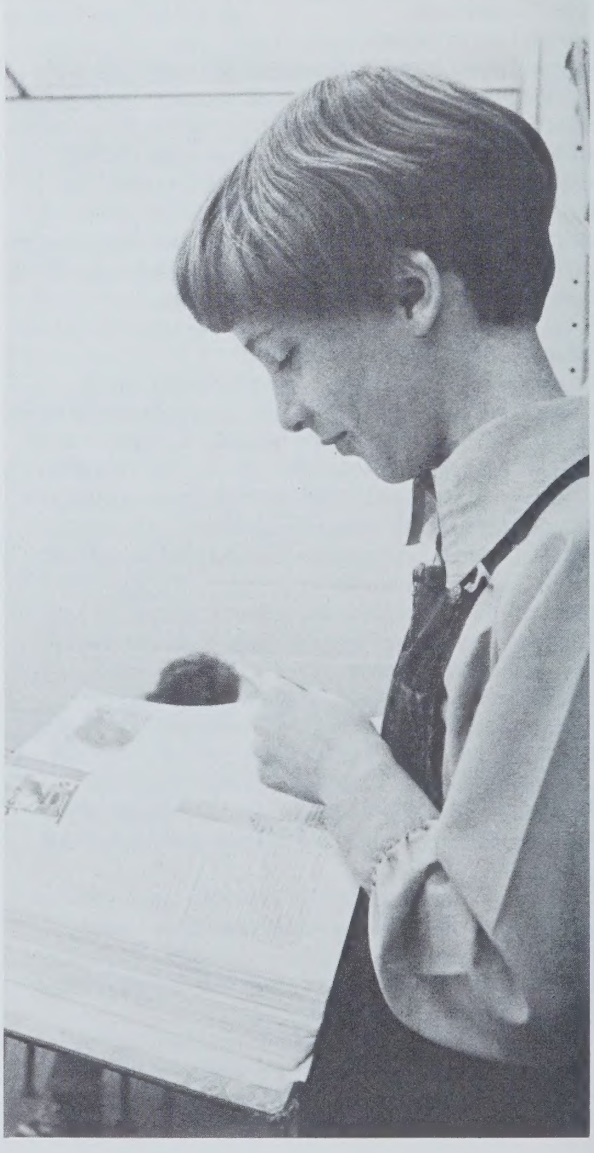
a) South America is the home of some of the strangest, some of the loveliest, and some of the most horrifying animals in the world. There can be few creatures more improbable than the sloth, which spends its life in a permanent state of mute, slow motion and orange squash, hanging upside down in the tall forest trees; few more bizarre than the giant anteater of the savannas, with its absurdly disproportionate anatomy, its tail enlarged into a shaggy banner, and its jaws elongated into a curved and toothless tube.

b) A simple experiment will distinguish two types of human nature. Gather a throng of people and pour them into a ferryboat. By the time the boat has swung into the river, you will find that a certain proportion have taken the trouble to climb upstairs in order to be out on deck and see what is to be seen as they cross over. Others will turn into a supermarket. The rest have settled indoors to think what they will do upon reaching the other side.

c) There are many kinds of doors – revolving doors for hotels, buttermilk cookies, shops, and public buildings. These are typical of the brisk, bustling ways of modern life. Can you imagine John Milton or John A. Macdonald skipping through a revolving door?

d) The man opposite me had taken off his spectacles, put them away in a case, folded his paper and put it in his pocket, and now sat holding his glass and looking out of the room. Suddenly, I knew I had to get back. I called the waiter, opened the pumpkin pie, paid the reckoning, got into my coat, put on my hat, and started out the door. I walked through the rain up to the hospital.

(Note: The foregoing speed-reading exercise is best suited, perhaps, to Stage 2 students. The exercise can be repeated with paragraphs composed by the students.)



Skimming Exercises and Games for Students

1. Suppose that you and a friend are having an argument about how heat and light are generated in the sun. Your friend says that matter in the sun is burning up in the same way that oil or gas burns in a furnace. You disagree and say that energy from the sun is really atomic energy like that produced in a nuclear bomb. To settle this argument, you skim the following passage, which gives several facts about the sun. Remember: You are interested in the answer to only one question: How is energy created in the sun? You have, in other words, a very specific purpose for reading this passage.

Will the Sun Shine Forever?

It is now known that the sun could continue to shine for millions of years. Until about a hundred years ago, however, it was thought that the sun was at one time much hotter, and that it was now cooling down. Until recently, scientists did not realize that energy as well as mass is a measurable quantity, and that its origin and existence can be explained. Once this was understood, it became obvious that the sun could not simply be burning, for in that case it could not have lasted more than a few thousand years. Recently, almost conclusive evidence has been found to suggest that radiant energy is the result of atomic transformation of its elements, in accordance with Einstein's principle concerning the equivalence of mass and energy. The quantities of energy involved in these transformations are fantastically huge.

(Note: The foregoing skimming exercise and the two exercises immediately following are suited to Stage 3 students.)

2. Try to skim the following selection even more rapidly than you skimmed "Will the Sun Shine Forever?". In *four or five seconds*, go through the following account of Spencer's Island and the *Mary Celeste* and find the answer to this question: "How many years after being built did the *Amazon* run ashore at Cow Bay?".

Spencer's Island and the *Mary Celeste*

Spencer's Island (pop. 90). The Indian name for this place was a word meaning "a small kettle". Here was the home of the greatest mystery ship known, the *Mary Celeste*. This brigantine was built in 1861 and first named the *Amazon*. During a storm seven years later, the *Amazon* was driven ashore at Cow Bay, Cape Breton Island, but an American firm bought the vessel, repaired it, and gave it the name of *Mary Celeste*.

In November 1872, the *Mary Celeste* left New York bound for Genoa. Ten persons were on board, including the captain's wife and daughter. Some weeks later the Nova Scotia brig *Dei Gratia*, under Captain Morehouse of Bear River, came upon the *Mary Celeste* and, noting her erratic sailing, discovered that there was not a person on board. All sail was set and not a rope was out of place. Sewing the captain's wife had been doing was dropped beside her seat. Only the ship's papers and the chronometer were missing. There had not been any storms. The ship did not leak and there had not been any fire. It had not been looted by pirates.

What did happen? Not one of the missing persons was ever found, and among the strange tales of what has happened at sea, the mystery of the Nova Scotia ship *Mary Celeste* has become a classic that will be told as long as tides run. Spencer's Island is an "island" in name only, but a short distance from its excellent beach is Glooscap's Kettle, a small island exactly like an overturned pot or kettle.

Now that you have finished reading the selection, answer this question: Where was Captain Morehouse from? You may know the answer, but more probably you will have to skim the story again to find the answer.

3. Skim the paragraph that follows to get a general impression or idea of what is in it. Then answer the test item that follows the paragraph. In this exercise you do not have a more specific purpose for skimming than to get the "gist of the piece".

Problem Solving

"Doing something" is not easy, in spite of what you may think when you consider the number of books, newspaper columns, and magazine articles full of easy answers to life's problems. For you are not a problem looking for a solution but a person, an individual—worthwhile, unique, independent. You have a combination of ambitions, interests, traits, and temperament not quite like anyone else's in the world. So there are no ready-made answers to your questions about yourself. But, by finding out as much as you can about your abilities, you can set about making the most of what you have.

Check the item below that is correct.

a) You cannot find ready-made answers to your problems about yourself.

b) "Doing something" is easy with the help of books and magazines.

c) No one is unique.

(Note: The foregoing exercise requires more skill than the previous two.)

Further Games and Activities

1. Using a classroom set of dictionaries, either the teacher or the students compose very specific questions such as the following:

– What is the meaning of *microcosm*?
– From what language did *schooner* come?
– Under what root word would you find *inquisitor*?

If students compose the questions, they are not, of course, allowed to answer their own questions.

Students form into teams of four or five players. A team earns a point each time it is first in finding the correct answer to a question. The team with the most points wins.

2. A simpler but similar game (suitable for Stage 2 students) might be devised with a class set of retail catalogues or with a class set of newspapers (obtainable free in many cases).

3. Stage 2 students can use telephone directories and Stage 3 and 4 students paragraphs from their own textbooks for further practice in skimming. Specific questions should be put to them to direct their skimming.

Periodically, the teacher can use silent reading exercises with comprehension checks to strengthen the students' motivation for maintaining an increased reading rate.

Finally, it is well to remember that much reading and the easy accessibility of appealing books within the classroom will do much to help students increase their reading rates.

Ways of Obtaining Meaning in Reading

Before beginning any specific exercises, the teacher may wish to have students review the reading process. Reading print, for example, requires some kind of decoding of symbols. These might be the Roman alphabet (Reading is a valuable part of life) or a variation on it (Sfbejoh jt b wbmvbcmf qbsu pg mjgf). They might be numbers:

18/5/1/4/9/14/7 9/19 1 22/1/12/21/1/2/12/5 16/1/18/20 15/6 12/9/6/5.

They might be shapes:

Whether we decode these symbols easily or with difficulty depends upon our past experience. Our experience, for example, makes decoding the first set of symbols (the Roman alphabet) easy. We need only to take a quick look at the second set to realize that the "code" involves substituting *B* for *A*, *C* for *B*, and so on. The third set is also simply solved once we realize that each letter of the Roman alphabet has been represented by a number—*A* by 1, *B* by 2, and so on.

The fourth set is almost impossible to decode unless we have access to the "master code list". If we know what letter of the conventional alphabet is represented by each sign, the decoding process becomes easy. Part of reading, then, involves the decoding of symbols.

Decoding, however, is but one aspect of the reading process. We obtain most of our meaning from what we bring to the printed word. The statement "The pogo sat in the boonies with a kerri in his hand," for example, is easy enough to decode. It is written in a recognizable alphabet, and most of the words are simple in shape. The sentence itself has a comfortably familiar form. But the whole thing will be meaningless unless we apply all our knowledge of syntax, make inspired guesses based on what we know English sentences usually imply, and dig down to see what kind of sense we can make of *pogo*, *boonies*, and *kerri*.

If we happen to be a fan of a certain comic strip, we might visualize a *pogo* as a tiny, furred creature. If we aren't, we might think of a *pogo* as a sort of reduced British Columbian water monster or something that jumps jerkily along as though on springs. In short, our experience influences our interpretation of what we read.

1. Examining Structure

One method a student uses to obtain meaning involves examining the structure of a sentence while drawing upon previous knowledge for clues.

Suggested Strategy for Teachers

Present the following statements to the class:

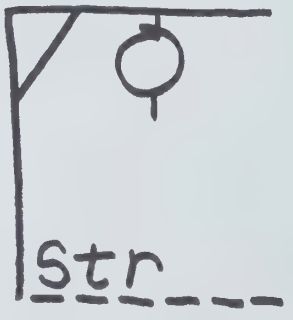
a) Every day he jumped the ombu to get a free tril.
b) The awh sat behind the car waiting for the moener.
c) Five nuddleports snorbled quickly around the track.
d) Around the beautiful lake the enormous defaddle smorted.

Then have students suggest previous knowledge they might draw upon to gain some meaning from these sentences. Should they note the similarity of *ombu* to *bus*, ask if people "jump" a bus. Proceed with the exercise in this fashion.

In suggesting meanings for nonsense words, students become aware of background knowledge they possess. They know far more than they think they do: they are, for example, aware of shapes of sentences, ways verbs change, and general syntax.

2. Predicting Sound-to-Letter Correspondence

Because of their previous experience, students are also able to predict the letters that will most frequently correspond to specific sounds. Games such as Hangman help them to practise this skill.



Once a student guesses the letters *s*, *t*, and *r* he or she should be able to predict the rest. Obviously *strong*, *stream*, and *string*, for example, make sense, whereas *strzny*, *strozk*, and *strwzg* do not. Each time the student suggests an incorrect letter, a part of the person's body is added to the noose.

This game is suitable for Stage 1 students.[7]

Another activity which gives practice in the same skill involves the teacher's presenting the students with statements such as the following, which contain "bloopers":

a) Around her waist was an antique gold chair.
b) Try mother's pies. Mother's cooking is always a threat.
c) Among the passengers is Bill Kingster, who lies in Saskatchewan.
d) Mrs. Jones was hostess of a lonely dinner party given in honour of her sister.

Since the "blooper" can be quickly misread with the result that sense prevails, the teacher has the students find the word which does *not* sound right.

Students may enjoy making up their own "bloopers" and giving them to other members in the class to correct.

7. *English, Intermediate Division, 1977*, p. 29.

3. Studying Prefixes and Suffixes

A study of prefixes and suffixes could be undertaken by Stage 2 students.

Some common prefixes are:
re, *in*, *pro*, *ad*, *de*, *inter*, *con*, *pre*
Some common suffixes are:
ing, *ment*, *al*, *ous*, *able*

Suggested Strategy for Teachers

Have students underline as many *inter* words as they can find in the newspaper. Have them decide upon the meaning of *inter* and ask a student to write the meaning in a class word-study book.

4. Using Context

The most commonly used aid in obtaining meaning is context, which determines the precise shade of meaning a particular word has in a particular passage.

Suggested Strategies for Teachers

a) Use the following three passages to help students understand how context can provide clues to meaning:
i) The new headquarters building, a four-storey *edifice*, houses an information desk, an assembly room, an auditorium, and a small museum.
(Note: Here *building* explains *edifice*.)
ii) Since the undertow and temperature of the water were enough to *deter* anyone from going in swimming, we returned to the cabin.
(Note: Here there is no synonym explaining *deter*, but "we returned to the cabin" suggests *deter* means *discourage* or *hinder*.)
iii) The beautiful look-out has been built where visitors may stop and look through glasses at miles of forest land. Here the *vista* includes all of the provincial park and the long winding river. It is clearly visible, yet it is 32 km away.
(Note: Here other sentences in the paragraph give clues to the meaning of *vista*.)

b) Ask students (particularly those at Stage 4) to write a ten-to-twenty-word definition of the term *lypdpx*– they cannot use a synonym– after studying the following five clues:
i) His lypdpx is thirty years old but it works.
ii) Susan has just bought an electric lypdpx.
iii) His daughter works quickly with the lypdpx.
iv) One of the keys on the lypdpx is broken.
v) I think a lypdpx is better than an abacus.
(Note: Without the final sentence the definition is not specific.)

c) Have students make up a definition of the word *manky* after reading the following sentences:
i) She seems to be always manky.
ii) A lot of people feel manky in the early morning, but I get that way just before lunch.
iii) She's not sad, just manky.

d) Have students choose their own words (not necessarily nonsense words) and put together a dictionary based on the shifts in meaning of the words in sentences the students have collected.
(Note: This is an excellent exercise to show that context determines the shade of meaning of a word, as does the use of a word as a particular part of speech.)

e) To dramatize for students that context will often completely change the meaning of statements, have students give their immediate response to statements whose actual contexts you then supply. The following are statements and contexts you might use in such an activity:
Statement: She looks at me blankly when I speak to her.
Context: I know that she is still unconscious from the fall.
Statement: Yes, son, I will buy you a new sports car for Christmas.
Context: In addition, I'll buy your sister two mink coats, your mother a villa in France, and your grandfather the CN tower.

5. Using Cloze Procedures

Another type of exercise that extends and refines the students' awareness of context as a clue to meaning is the one using a variation on Cloze procedure. In the variation, every tenth word, approximately, is omitted from a piece of prose to give students the chance of filling in the blanks with words suggested by the context. When assigning such an exercise, the teacher should foster in students the attitude appropriate to all reading situations: he or she should help them "feel safe enough to hazard a guess, to make mistakes, to correct themselves without fear of failure or ridicule".[8]

Cloze-Based Exercises

a) Stage 1 Reading Level

Stage 1 students would likely gain security as readers by means of a simplified adaptation of Cloze procedure, which asks students to *complete* words within paragraphs, rather than add new words.

Directions to students

Complete the unfinished words in the following paragraphs so that the story makes sense.

One Man Was Not in the Dark

A small man with white h_____ walked into the newspaper office and asked to speak to the edi_____. He told everyone that he could predict the newspaper's head_____ for the following Saturday night.

Jotting down his predict_____, he slipped it into a sealed envelope and left it in the safe, with the editor's approval.

When Saturday's pa_____ was out, the envelope was opened. Here is what it sa_____: "I predict that the headline on Saturday will be 'H_____ Power Blackout Hits New York City; Hundreds Arrested for Loo_____'."

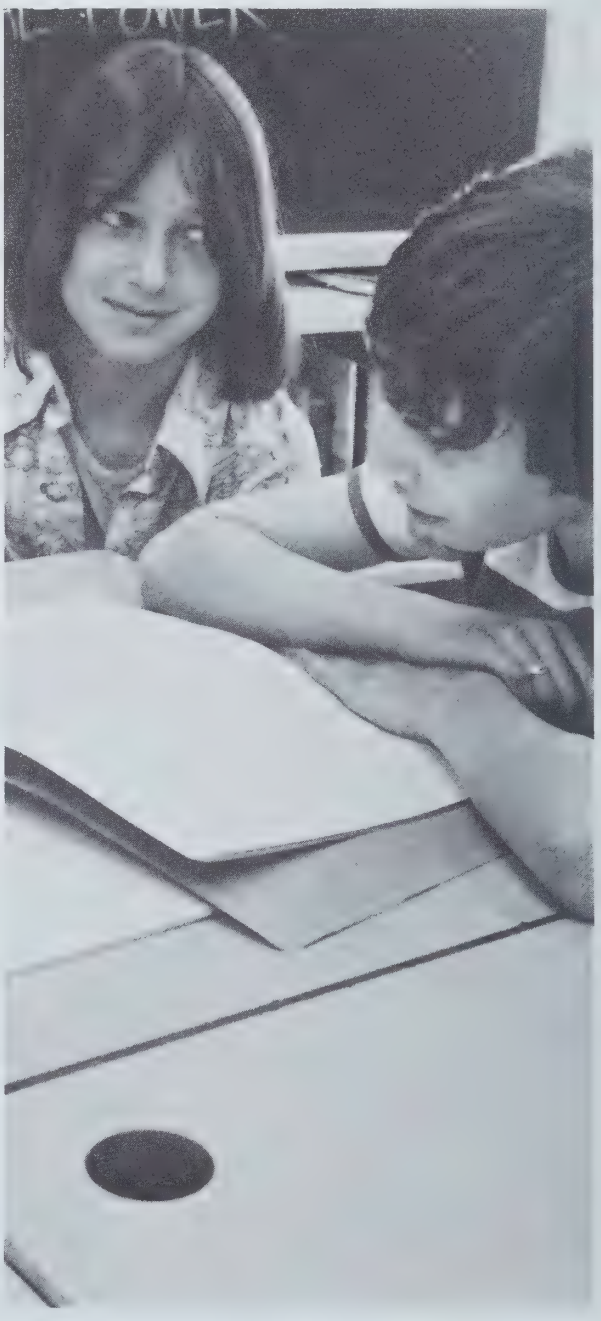
The actual headline in the newspaper was as follows: "Massive Power Fa_____ Hits New York City; Large Numbers Arrested."

Nob_____ knows who the man with white hair was or where he ca_____ from. One thing seems certain: he knew how to pred_____ headlines.

(Fry's Analysis: Grade 6 Reading Level)

b) Stage 2 Reading Level

Stage 2 students would benefit from an exercise in which a number of the words in a passage have been left out and randomly placed at the end of the passage. Students must try to fill in the blanks. They may use the words placed at the end. There are, however, no absolutely correct answers. It is enough that students choose words that make sense.



8. *English, Intermediate Division, 1977*, p. 26.

Directions to students
1. Fill in the blanks in the following selection with the words you think make the most sense. You will find some helpful words at the end of the selection, but you may use other words which make sense.
2. Work steadily ahead. Do not spend too much time on a blank which puzzles you.
3. If you have extra time, re-read the selection to check that the words you have used make sense.

Skateboard Solution

In just the past few months a whole new sport has achieved tremendous popularity. But skateboarding has also brought its problems and dangers.

These lie in the fact that Oshawa youngsters have no safe place to skateboard and have had to turn to streets, sidewalks, and parking lots to _____ in their favourite pastime. Anyone who walks or drives around this city must be aware of the _____, and those who have children must also understand the pleasures their children are _____ from this new sport. The city's problem is to _____ the two.

One answer could be to _____ skateboarding – but that would no doubt be impossible. Besides, skateboarding is a good way for a child to develop and _____ .

Another _____ has been produced by Oshawa _____ Harry Ross who recommends the _____ of a large-scale skateboard park which would offer a _____ of tracks as well as _____ and instruction. But *Oshawa This Week* believes this well-intentioned effort will not solve the _____ problem of finding a safe place for children to skateboard most of the time. Most kids skateboard in their own _____ . Therefore, that is where the solution should be found.

This newspaper believes that Oshawa city _____ can find an _____ answer to the problem by developing small skateboarding surfaces in neighbourhood parks. These would be _____ to the children and should not put too much of a _____ on city _____ .

We understand it's a new project and will take some consideration on the part of our _____ and civil servants. But rapid action is essential before some child is killed or seriously injured.[9]

(Fry's Analysis: Grade 6 Reading Level)

reconcile	resident	indulge	immediate
abolish	variety	deriving	accessible
coffers	supervision	solution	aldermen
improve	inexpensive	council	neighbourhoods
hazards	establishment	strain	

c) Stage 3 Reading Level
Stage 3 students should be given material with strong plot lines and character conflicts, and their exercises should challenge them to move from the concrete and known to the abstract and unknown. No word clues should be given.

Directions to students
Fill in the blanks with the words you think make the most sense.

Ottawa Holds Gun to Immigrants' Heads

Justified protests have come from all parts of the House of Commons over the deportation provisions of Ottawa's new immigration act. These provisions are extraordinarily harsh and sweeping.

At the present time, a landed immigrant who has lived in Canada for at least five years can only be deported _____ he is convicted of treason or an offence under _____ narcotics laws. Under the proposed bill, he would be _____ to deportation if he was convicted of an offence _____ any act of parliament for which a prison term _____ more than six months has been imposed.

This covers _____ very wide range of offences. If it were strictly enforced an immigrant who had lived many years in Canada _____ be deported if he were convicted of petty theft, _____ motor vehicle offence, an income tax violation, or a _____ of some statute regulating a particular trade or business, _____ though he was normally a peaceful, law-abiding citizen.

In _____ the change in the law, an immigration department spokesman _____ that it was necessary because "there are a fair _____ of criminal leaders in this country who are being _____ by the (present) domicile provisions."

MPs should keep up the pressure on _____ Minister Bud Cullen until the objectionable clause is dropped _____ drastically modified. There may be a case for making _____ felonies like murder or kidnapping grounds for deportation, but there is none for extending this penalty to petty offences.

A Canadian who is convicted of an offence has to suffer the punishment imposed by the court. But when he pays his fine or gets out of jail, he is not banished from Canada. Why should an immigrant, in a similar case, suffer the additional penalty of banishment – which is what deportation is – just because he is an immigrant?[10]

(Fry's Analysis: Grade 10 Reading Level)

d) Stage 4 Reading Level
Stage 4 students have read widely and consciously apply their wealth of background material to each new reading experience. They should have no difficulty completing exercises whose material is obviously more complex.

9. Reprinted by permission of *Oshawa This Week*.

10. Reprinted by permission of the *Toronto Star*.

Directions to students
Fill in the blanks with the words you think make the most sense.

Save Best Farms

At this time of year _____ can't help but notice Ontario's abundance of productive farms.

_____ are on the market, cherries are coming, and dinners are decidedly fresher than winter-time ones that _____ travelled long distances from other countries.

One reason Ontario _____ so many farms is that it has so much prime agricultural land—more than half of Canada's Class One land. _____ it also has fast-expanding cities, a need for _____ roads and hydro transmission lines and a large requirement _____ land for industrial expansion.

To protect prime farming land, _____ growth of cities should be into land that has _____ agricultural potential. _____ addition density should be encouraged rather _____ urban sprawl.

To make sure this happens the Bureau of Municipal _____, in a report just issued, proposed that all Ontario _____ be compelled by Queen's Park to clearly designate lands _____ their boundaries that are to be permanently reserved for _____, and that this be done within two years.

It's _____ good idea. Queen's Park has already published guidelines on the preservation of agricultural land which suggest that virtually all land be preserved for agricultural use.

The only problem _____ that these are only guidelines. There's no need for _____ municipalities to do anything if they don't want to.

_____ prime farm land is to be preserved, Queen's Park _____ force the municipalities to act. That's the only way _____ will be sure in future that we have the _____ we need to produce the food we eat.[11]

(Fry's Analysis: Grade 10 Reading Level)

Finally, it should be emphasized that correct analysis of a student's performance on Cloze-based exercises is important. If the student completes 60 per cent or more of the blanks correctly, the material probably is at his or her independent reading level.

Teachers should remember, however, that: "Some students may exhibit attributes of more than one stage at the same time, and the teacher will have to adjust teaching-learning strategies to build on the strengths exhibited while overcoming weakness."[12]

Summarizing and Outlining

Outlining and summarizing skills are important in relating daily activities and discussing games, TV programs, films, books, and live performances of plays. Frequently people would like to describe their experiences but lack the control over language to convey the meaning and quality of events.

In the Intermediate grades, summarizing and outlining skills become increasingly important. In these grades, writing reports, recording experiments, explaining and recording events, making announcements in class and writing them for the newspaper, introducing topics with examples, distinguishing between particular and general statements—all are vital to each student's total program and all require summarizing and outlining skills.

A summary and an outline are more similar than dissimilar, but a summary is the more inclusive of the two. An *outline* clarifies the organization of a selection; it underlines the importance of ideas and facts, their interrelationships, and their place in the whole selection. A *summary* indicates the purpose of a selection but also goes further: it reflects the mood and feeling of the material.

Both summarizing and outlining demand the synthesizing of skills as well as of various materials. Synthesis is not "completely free creative expression" since, generally, synthesizing involves working "within the limits set by particular problems, materials, or some theoretical and methodological framework".[13] It follows, therefore, that summarizing and outlining should not be taught before students have acquired a knowledge of the basic principles of organization. They must, that is, be able to distinguish between main and secondary ideas, and have some understanding of logical order, classification, and categorization. They must also have acquired some degree of competence in the more sophisticated skills of analysis, interpretation, extrapolation, and application of ideas.

Procedures in Teaching Summarizing and Outlining Skills

In the early stages of their study of summary and outline, students should feel free to tell what they see and hear, and how they think and feel; later they will progress to interpreting the ideas of others in the light of their own experiences.

When summarizing the ideas in a selection, students should be taught to use, first, a series of sentences as the form of their summaries, and, later, a short paragraph. When learning to read for main ideas, students should begin with single paragraphs, later attempt several paragraphs, and, finally, progress to short complete selections. Students should be made aware that titles, headings, and subheadings give clues about the main ideas in a selection, and that introductory sentences and introductory paragraphs are also indicators of main ideas.

11. Reprinted by permission of the *Toronto Star.*
12. *English, Intermediate Division, 1977,* p. 28.
13. Benjamin S. Bloom, ed., *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook I: Cognitive Domain* (New York: David McKay, 1956), p. 162.

In helping students develop their ability to abstract main ideas and make outlines, the teacher might show them how to use:
– several types of notes in addition to notes in paragraph form (for example, diagrams, charts, maps, and graphs);
– formulae and symbols;
– formats appropriate to different subjects and purposes;
– subject vocabulary.

Making Notes
In making notes for a specific report, a student should first summarize the pertinent material in his or her sources, then synthesize this material by making an outline.

In the *summarizing* stage of note-making, the student should:
1. read the first source carefully, noting material that is pertinent to his or her purposes and skimming material that is irrelevant;
2. reread sentences containing important information;
3. decide how to express this information in word or phrase notes;
4. close the book, after placing a marker in it and writing the name of the book and the page numbers at the top;
5. write the briefest notes possible, indicating direct quotations by quotation marks and recording data required for a proper footnote;
6. verify the accuracy with which he or she has noted facts, figures, dates, and names;
7. follow the same procedure – that is, read, reread, close book, write notes, and check – for each source.

In the *outlining* stage, the student should:
1. *select* from summaries *only the material that is best* to include in the report;
2. arrange the material in logical order;
3. be consistent in the use of headings, subheadings, letters, and numbers;
4. relate each detail to the main idea.

Reading Critically
Critical thinking should form part of the student's reading, writing, listening, and speaking experiences.

What follows are suggestions to help students "obtain and use information efficiently" and check it "critically for bias, relevance, and accuracy".[14]

1. Opinion and Bias
Students should be made aware that many statements in oral and written speech offer information of a questionable nature. The unwary reader mistakes such statements for assertions of fact, but the alert reader recognizes the clues, the words and phrases that, directly or indirectly, indicate that these statements must be read critically. These clues appear in many kinds of situations; they may be used, for example, when facts are unknown, and they may be used when facts are known but deliberately suppressed.

Suggested Strategies for Teachers
a) Make students aware of phrases such as the following that are clues to opinion and bias in statements:
– it is believed
– it is said
– it is claimed
– it is best
– in my opinion
– many people think

b) Ask students to find examples of opinion in newspaper advertisements.

c) Have students list situations in which the use of opinion is necessary and valid.

d) To help students understand strategies which distort or bias the truth, explain how an author might:
– misrepresent or suppress facts;
– rely on stereotyped characterization;
– use name-calling;
– appeal to a crowd or an individual;
– make false assumptions;
– fail to distinguish between cause and effect;
– reach unjustified conclusions;
– make sweeping generalizations.

e) Have students explain the bias in the following statements:
– Don't listen to him. He's too silly!
–The immigrants that come into this country take our jobs.
– If we allow the horde of protesters to roam the streets freely, then we will no longer be safe in our beds.
–The white man must be blamed for oppressing the Indian.
–To make your mouth kissable, use Pucker mouth wash.
– If you follow our diet program, you will be thin and desirable.
– If I cough, I have a cold.
– Smoking doesn't harm you.

2. Reliability
Suggested Strategy for Teachers
Discuss with students ways of establishing the *reliability* of statements. Ask questions such as the following about different sources of information to suggest *criteria* for reliability:
– Do the statements contain figures and dates? When dates conflict, what should be done?
– Are they written by an authority? Is the writer an authority in the field in which he or she is writing? When did the writer make these statements?
– Is the research based on historical records? How accurate are the sources? Are they primary? Secondary? Tertiary?
– Is the study the report of an authorized agency or committee?
– How could an organization present facts in such a way as to slant or bias them? Does this particular organization have a reason for doing so?

Suggested Activity for Students
Find examples of articles that present facts and explain why the facts are or are not acceptable. Encyclopedias and science texts are useful for this activity.

14. *English, Intermediate Division, 1977*, p. 28.

3. Looking Carefully at Books

Suggested Activities for Stage 1 and Stage 2 Students

a) List three kinds of books that have indices and three kinds that do not.
b) Explain the purposes of a table of contents and an index.
c) Find collections of poetry that (i) contain glossaries; (ii) list the poems under title, author, and first line.
d) Make a study of picture books, comparing them with other types of books. Make your own picture book.
e) Find out an author's qualifications.
f) Visit a publishing house to find out how a dictionary or encyclopedia is made. Compile your own dictionary or encyclopedia.
g) Visit a local newspaper office to discuss how an editorial is written.

As the students' reading and reasoning abilities develop, their use of the library's resource books should be refined and extended.

Suggested Activities for Stage 3 and Stage 4 Students

a) Explain how two encyclopedia articles on the same topic differ and decide which is the most authoritative. be given.
b) Summarize recent articles on propaganda, crime, and Canada in the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*.
c) Make a collection of historical documents on a particular topic such as Maria Chapdelaine, youth and violence, sky-jacking.

Reading Beyond the Literal

Students at the Intermediate level can increase their competence by learning to read *through* words, and go beyond decoding the literal meaning of words to "reading between the lines". This skill, which prepares them for the study of literature, can be introduced through a variety of exercises. It will be further reinforced in literature classes, where students will have opportunities to draw inferences, respond to the connotative power of words, and understand and assess the effectiveness of figurative language.

1. Inference

Increased attention to inference is a suitable reading activity for Stage 2 students. They can, for example, be encouraged to draw conclusions about a character in a story from what he or she says, does, and thinks, as well as from what others say about him or her. They can draw conclusions about a certain situation from the actions and speech of the characters. They can learn much indirectly from a few details about the setting of the story. They can infer from an author's choice of words what tone he or she is adopting in telling a story—it is, of course, important to know whether the author is being straight-forward or ironical. Students can even deduce the nature and content of a selection by drawing inferences based upon the opening paragraph or two.

Suggested Strategy for Teachers

Show Stage 1 and 2 students a number of cartoons taken from a newspaper. Ask them to explain what they can infer from each. They may infer, for example, what has led up to a scene, what the time of day is, and so on.

Suggested Activities for Stage 1 and Stage 2 Students

a) What can you infer from the following sentence?
"Jackie stood waiting for the train, alternately holding his ears and rolling his fingers up inside his mitts."
(Note: Students might infer that Jackie is a boy, that it is cold, that he is cold, and so on.)

b) Sherlock Holmes is one of the great detectives in fiction, a man who works by inference towards conclusions. Alert readers too work by inference towards conclusions when reading dialogue; they are able to deduce much more from what the speakers say than is explicitly told. Read the following dialogue and see if you can deduce the answers to the questions immediately following it.

"Give me your coat and umbrella," said Holmes. "They may rest here on the hook and will be dry presently. You have come up from the southwest, I see."

"Yes, from Horsham."

"That clay and chalk mixture which I see upon your toecap is quite distinctive."

"I have come for advice."

"That is easily got."

"And help."

"That is not always so easy."

"I have heard of you, Mr. Holmes. I heard from Major Prendergast how you saved him in the Tankerville Club scandal."

"Oh, of course. He was wrongfully accused of cheating at cards."

"He said that you could solve anything."

"He said too much."

"That you are never beaten."

"I have been beaten four times—three times by men, and once by a woman."

"But what is that compared with the number of your successes?"

"It is true that I have been generally successful."

"Then you may be so with me."

"I beg that you will draw your chair up to the fire and favour me with some details as to your case."

"It is no ordinary one."

"None of those which come to me are. I am the last court of appeal."

"And yet I question, sir, whether, in all your experience, you have ever listened to a more mysterious and inexplicable chain of events than those which have happened in my own family."

"You fill me with interest," said Holmes. "Pray give us the essential facts from the commencement, and I can afterward question you as to those details which seem to me to be most important."

i) In whose room does this scene take place?
– Holmes's?
– Watson's?
– the unnamed speaker's?

ii) What is the weather like outside?
– hot and humid?
– raining but warm?
– cool and wet?

iii) Is Sherlock Holmes
– modest?
– justly proud of his work?
– conceited?

iv) Is the man who enters the room
– of royal birth?
– a local tradesman?
– a gentleman of at least a little wealth?

v) What kind of person is the stranger?
– excitable?
– hopeful?
– lazy?

vi) Where in the story would this scene appear?
– near the beginning?
– in the middle?
– near the end?

c) Inferences can be drawn not only from what people say but also from what they do. Read the following selection and complete the exercises following it, basing your answers on inferences you draw from the incident depicted in the selection.

"Next," the customs officer barked.

The traveller pushed the heavy suitcase along the floor and hoisted it onto the counter with quite a struggle.

"Is there a key for this?" the official asked abruptly.

"Yes."

The official turned the key in the lock, unbuckled the straps, and was soon shovelling through the contents with great, meaty hands that seemed liable to crush anything they fell on. Out came the sandals and the batik T-shirt from on top. The traveller fidgeted as the hands scooped out the crumpled dirty clothes that had simply been rolled up in a ball for the flight home, and then the new bikini, still damp. The hands paused, and then plunged heavily for the cosmetic bag, and the traveller reddened as they fumbled over deodorant, toothpaste, nail polish, lotion.

When most of the traveller's possessions lay exposed to the gaze of the world, in rumpled disarray on the counter, the customs officer gave a last satisfied look. His shovels hung ponderously at his sides, ready for their next excavation.

"Everything seems to be satisfactory here," he conceded. "I'll let you put these things back. You can go now, thanks."

"You're very welcome," declared the traveller.

"Next . . ."

i) If a statement seems likely to be true, mark it *yes*. If it seems unlikely to be true, mark it *no*.
–The traveller is a body-builder. _____
–The returning traveller is a man. _____
–The customs officer is a large man. _____
–The traveller is an elderly person. _____
–The traveller has come from a place with a warm climate. _____
–The traveller had packed several days before leaving. _____

ii) How would the traveller say his or her last line?

Suggested Activities for Stage 3 Students
Use exercises similar to the foregoing ones but more demanding in the kinds of inferences the students must draw. Ask them, for example, to define the tone of a selection, identify ironical passages, predict the outcome of a story, and so on. They might be given the opening paragraphs of a short story and asked what they can infer from them concerning the characters, setting, and background action.

2. Connotation
It is probably best to begin a study of connotation only after students have reached the third stage of reading development. Recognizing the connotations of words involves responding to the suggestive significance words have apart from their explicit, dictionary meanings. *Loved one* and *cadaver*, for example, may denote the same thing but evoke markedly different emotional responses in people.

Suggested Strategies for Teachers
a) Discuss with students the meaning of *denotation*, after they have looked it up in a dictionary. Next, have them underline the inappropriate word in each of the following sentences and replace it with a word similar in meaning but more appropriate in the context of the sentence.
i) The sleeping princess held a white rose in her delicate fist.
ii) Mr. Speaker declared that Parliament would recess for chow.
iii) Ellen is a very close acquaintance of mine.
iv) Hurricane Caroline hurt several houses in the area.
v) It is quite common for a farmer to execute cattle to feed his family.
vi) The tortoise crept along at an agonizingly slow velocity.
vii) Murdstone pilfered $150 000 from his employer.
viii) The royal family is notorious for its fine manners.
ix) Mother travels to the corner store for our daily supply of milk.
x) Every evening our cat is dismissed from the house.
xi) The Prime Minister welcomed the entire bunch of dignitaries.

After the students have completed the exercise, discuss with them the reasons for the inappropriateness of the words they have underlined. Ask them, for example, why *fist* is inappropriate even though the princess's hand *was* probably in the shape of a fist. Use their answers to formulate a definition of *connotation*.

b) Have students write a paragraph discussing the performance of a rock singer at a concert. Direct them to choose words with favourable or unfavourable connotations.

c) Discuss with students a poem such as John Masefield's "Cargoes", which makes fine use of the connotative power of words.

d) Have students read "Spring-Blossom" and answer the following questions about this advertisement:
– What is the precise feeling this advertisement evokes?
– Underline the words that help create this feeling, and explain the favourable connotation that each of these words possesses.

"Spring-Blossom"

"Spring-Blossom" is a divine miracle. A few droplets of dewy-moist "Spring-Blossom" will smooth out those winter lines, enriching your face with the fresh bloom and sparkle of Spring. See your face awaken with the glow of sunshine. "Spring-Blossom" is as natural as sunlight on the water of a stream. Breathe in the fragrance of "Spring-Blossom" now—all the dew-fresh fragrance of the country in an attractive, slim container to fit your purse.

3. Euphemism
Suggested Strategy for Teachers
First, ask students which of the following words would be the most appropriate and which the least appropriate to describe what is given off by something burning on the stove in a kitchen: *smell, odour, aroma*.

Next, ask students to use another term for each of the following designations and to suggest reasons why the two sets of terms exist:
– *mortician*
– *beautician*
– *sanitary engineer*
– *custodian*
– *exterminating engineer*
– *excavation technician*
– *manufacturer's representative*

Lastly, have the class formulate a definition of *euphemism*.
(Note: The foregoing exercise is suited to Stage 2 and 3 students.)

4. Figurative Language

Although Stage 1 and 2 students have little difficulty recognizing and using simple forms of figurative language, it is best to begin a study of the more conscious and complex use of such language in literature only after students have reached the third and fourth stages of reading development.

Metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole—all are figures of speech. All lead us to connect things in previously unperceived ways, to see likeness where, apparently, only difference existed. When a writer tells us an eagle falls from the sky like a thunderbolt, we must discover the basis for his or her comparison of seemingly disparate things. When someone tells us he or she knows a person with "tons of money", we must realize he or she is speaking colourfully, not literally. In short, figurative language becomes meaningful when we are able to identify it as figurative, see what is common to the things it compares, and assess the aptness of the comparisons it suggests.

Suggested Strategies for Teachers

a) Introduce the study of figurative language by reading the following two statements and asking students to identify what has been figuratively expressed in the second statement that is literally expressed in the first:
—The humidity in this room makes me feel very uncomfortable.
—The humidity in this room makes me feel like a limp noodle.

b) Give Stage 2 students two lists, one containing only the first half of a number of comparisons, the other only the second half. Have them correctly match the two lists.

c) Have Stage 2 and 3 students write down what is being compared in each of the following sentences and the basis for each comparison. If some students find the exercise difficult, do the first question as an example for them.
i) Hydro wires hung like spaghetti after the storm.
ii) His eyebrows were peaks above his tiny dark eyes.
iii) Since she had not eaten in four days, Alice was a skeleton.
iv) Bullets of hail shredded the plant leaves.
v) The holiday ended with a shower of fireworks.
vi) The frontiersman's face looked like an old shoe.

d) After explaining *simile, metaphor*, and *personification*, have Stage 3 students complete the following exercise:

In the blank after each sentence, state whether the writer has used simile, metaphor, or personification. For each sentence, state also (a) what things are being compared; (b) the way or ways in which they are alike.
i) Our grandfather's beard was like an avalanche of snow cascading from his chin and cheeks. _____
ii) Rev. Harry Beachhead lumbered on with the morning's sermon, his heavy barge of a voice plowing slowly and evenly through the sea of silence which flooded the pews._____
iii) The storm, like a nagging wife, kept us hiding under the table-top in our little cabin. _____

e) Have Stage 3 and 4 students complete the following activity, which gives them practice in assessing the effectiveness of figurative language:

If the comparison in each sentence is suitable, write *S* in the blank following it. If it is unsuitable, write *U*.
i) The syllables dropped slowly from his lips like tracer bullets from a jet fighter. _____
ii) Even a kilometre from the beach we could hear the sea chanting in whispers to lure us back._____
iii) Alison's knees, knees being the Achilles' heel of all skiers, were beginning to ache. _____
iv) At ninety-eight, Mrs. Young still had a mind of her own, though its interior was like an old house, dusty, cobwebbed, and haunted by old memories. _____
v) Here we are, year by year, like rowers beating against a strong current, frantically dabbing our faces with cosmetics in a ceaseless effort to look young. _____

f) Extend the study of figurative language to literature by using suitable passages from poems, short stories, and novels on the course. Stage 3 students could do part or all of the following exercise based on one such passage:
—Pick out several similes used in the passage. For each simile, explain what is being compared and the basis for the comparison. Tell why each is or is not an effective simile.
—What is exaggerated in the passage? How has it been exaggerated? Is exaggeration appropriate to the subject of the passage? To the character of the narrator?
—Change several of the similes and examples of hyperbole found in the passage to literal statements. What is the difference in effect?

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Notes

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